

## **When Everyone's Super** by Kamije Celeek

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**Summary:** It's been fifteen years since the Ban went into effect and El Wheeler has been living happily with her husband and three kids. In the back of her mind, though, she misses superhero work. When the opportunity to do it again arises, she hesitates to go through... and in the meantime, her oldest enemy is raising its ugly head...

## When Everyone's Super

There's an odd silence in the air today, Hopper notes. Like the city of Hawkins is holding its collective breath in anticipation. It hadn't felt like this in years, not since the Ban went into effect. Superheroes and their villains no longer fought in the streets. Now it's up to the cops and other law enforcement to keep the peace instead. But this silence...this silence is familiar. It's the same silence that would precede somebody with powers wrecking the streets and being stopped by somebody like his daughter—somebody who used their powers for good instead of evil.

On instinct, he grabs his radio and puts out a call.

*Evacuate downtown. We have an A-113.*

And he's right. By the end of the day, several buildings downtown will be destroyed by a battle between super-powered beings. A small band of heroes will emerge to fight back and kickstart the process of reversing the Ban. But our story doesn't start with that fight. No, our story begins with a little family in the suburbs of Hawkins. A little family called the Wheelers.

On the day our story began, two weeks before Hopper noted the strange silence, it was a normal day for the Wheelers, family of five. El got up and showered to get ready for work while Mike went and woke up Melody and Ben for school. Then Sarah started crying and he went to her room to lift her out of her crib. By the time he got to the kitchen, the older Wheeler kids were pouring their cereal and El was toasting herself a waffle.

"Morning, love," he told her, kissing her on the cheek before setting Sarah in her highchair.

"Mm. Morning," she replied. He wrapped his arms around her and planted another kiss, this time on her lips.

"Have I mentioned that I love you today?"

"What about yesterday?"

"I love you every day." She giggled and kissed the tip of his nose.

"Ew, trying to eat here," Melody gagged. Ben was ignoring them in favor of enjoying his sugar-coated bowl of milk. Mike released El and grabbed a box of Cheerios from the cabinet, which he poured into a bowl and set in front of Sarah.

"I'll see you when I get home." El kissed each of her kids on the cheek and Sarah babbled, reaching for her mother's chestnut curls. "No, baby. Mommy has to go to work. I love you all. Bye!"

Once El was out the door, Mike checked his watch.

"Okay, you kids have fifteen minutes to finish getting ready. Watch Sarah while I hop in the shower."

"Don't slip!" Melody called as he walked towards the bathroom.

Within fifteen minutes, it was time to go. Mike strapped Sarah into her car-seat and Melody slid into the passenger seat as Ben took his spot in the back with his baby sister. First stop was the high school, then the elementary school. After that, it was Mike and Sarah all day. As they drove, they passed City Hall, where protestors were staked outside. Their signs depicted comic-book covers and silhouettes of superheroes with words like UNBAN and REVERSE THE BAN.

"SUPERHEROES ARE A VITAL PART OF OUR SOCIETY!" the ringleader yelled and Mike groaned as he recognized his friend Dustin. "LET THEM PROTECT US!"

"Uncle Dustin's going to get his ass kicked one of these days," muttered Melody.

"Not as long as your grandfather's in charge of the police. He won't touch the protestors unless they get violent."

"Do you agree with them?"

"What, about reversing the Ban?"

"Yeah."

"I kind of do. Your mom loved being a hero because she loved protecting people, so it made her happy. If she could go back to that, I think she'd love it."

"Why did the Ban happen in the first place?" snorted Ben.

"Because some guy who jumped off a building sued the superhero who saved him. The hero broke the guy's collarbone. It's a load of bullshit."

"Mom lost her job because of that guy. Screw him."

"Agreed, son." He stopped the car at the curb and Melody grabbed her backpack. "Have a good day, Mels! See you after school."

"Love you, Dad!" She got out and headed towards the building, watching her dad pull away.

At the elementary school, Mike was about to drive away when there was a tapping at his window. He saw that it was Mr. Kowalski, Ben's teacher and a man who had taught Mike, too.

"There a problem, Mr. Kowalski?" he asked.

"Yes, Mr. Wheeler. Could you come in for a conference this afternoon? It's about your son."

"I can come in, no problem."

"Good. Two-thirty, Dr. Jennings's office. I'll see you then."

Mike sighed and headed back onto the road, glancing at Sarah in the rearview mirror.

"Well, sweetheart, it's just you and me. Any ideas on what we can do?" Sarah babbled and Mike laughed. "I have writing to do. Let's get me some coffee and you a little treat. Just don't tell Mommy."

At the coffee shop, Mike balanced Sarah on his hip and ordered his usual coffee. For her, he ordered a plain bagel. The cashier cooed over how cute the baby girl was and how *adorable* it was that Mike was being such a good father. Mike just laughed good-naturedly and

waited at a table for his name to be called, bouncing Sarah on his knee.

"Hey, you're Mike Wheeler, right?" asked a woman. He looked up to see a young woman with dark brown hair and bright brown eyes smiling at him.

"Yeah," he replied. Sarah narrowed her eyes at the woman.

"My name is Elizabeth. I *love* your work. It's so... realistic and fantastical at the same time!"

"Well, thank you."

"And is this your daughter? *God*, she's adorable."

"Thank you again. She takes after her mother." She dug into her bag and pulled out a copy of *Stranger Things*—Mike's first novel. "Could... could you sign this? It's not every day I meet my favorite author!"

Mike pulled a pen out of Sarah's diaper bag and signed the title page. Elizabeth let out a happy squeal and put the book back in her bag.

"Thank you, Mr. Wheeler! I'll treasure it forever!"

Once Elizabeth was gone, Mike smiled at his daughter.

"She was weird, wasn't she?"

"Ba-ba!"

"Yep."

"Mike!" called the barista. He went and grabbed his order before leaving the coffeeshop with Sarah.

Once at home, he got to work on writing and making sure Sarah was taken care of. It was something he was used to by now and it was normal. It was good. Not to mention Sarah was his only kid *without* powers. For some reason, it comforted him when his oldest daughter and his only son had both taken after their mother's... abilities. Sarah was his kid who took after him and he was fine with that since it

meant he felt more connected with her.

And once Sarah was down for her nap and he took a break from writing, his mind drifted to the protests he'd seen at City Hall. Would it be possible for his wife to go back to the hero work she'd loved so much? Or for his kids to not hide their gifts from the world? Maybe that was the answer to all of Benny's discipline problems—he simply needed an outlet to get rid of all that energy.

*Shit. I have a meeting with Mr. Killjoy-can't-take-a-joke.*

*Great...*

He knew what this was about. More than likely Benny had played a prank and Mr. Kowalski hadn't thought it was funny. Not that the man had ever found anything funny, as far as Mike could remember.

At 2, Mike headed out to the elementary school with Sarah in tow. Dr. Jennings—a no-nonsense woman with dark brown hair tied in a bun—was sitting at her desk. Across from her was Benny, looking incredibly annoyed, and Mr. Kowalski.

"Ah, Mr. Wheeler. Welcome," Dr. Jennings greeted him. "As you are aware, we are having issues with Benjamin again."

"What is it this time?" Mike took a seat and set down Sarah's carrier. She giggled and clapped her hands.

"He put a tack on my chair!" snapped Mr. Kowalski.

"You don't have proof it was me!" Benny snapped back.

Mr. Kowalski pulled a tape out of his bag.

"I set up a camera so I could catch you this time!" He went over to the VCR next to Dr. Jennings. "May I?"

"Of course." Dr. Jennings looked just as annoyed as Benny—perhaps because this was the fourth time this month that this kind of thing had happened.

Mr. Kowalski put the tape in the player and rewinded it to the time of

the incident. There was no tack one minute, then a tack the next. It appeared to have fallen off of the bulletin board and onto the chair.

"But look at him!" Mr. Kowalski paused it. "He *moved*! At the same time the tack fell!"

Mike sighed.

"I want that little brat *expelled*!"

"Mr. Kowalski, I'm willing to transfer Benjamin to another class, but I refuse to expel him without solid proof that he is doing this."

"That's fine with me."

"For now, Mr. Wheeler, you can take Benjamin home. And I hope we won't have this problem in his new class."

Mike picked up Sarah's carrier and walked out of the office with Benny behind him.

"Dad, I—"

"We'll talk in the car."

Benny sighed. He knew that tone. His father was disappointed... again. Once they were in the car and on the road, he glanced at his baby sister, who babbled happily, before looking back at his father in the driver's seat.

"I'm sorry."

"What do you want me to do, Benny? Grounding you doesn't work. Taking away your privileges doesn't work. Nothing I've tried works with you."

"I'm... I'm just so *bored*."

"I know you are. And I think that's the problem. You're a super-powered kid with no outlet to use your powers, and that's making you have a lot of pent-up energy that you need to get rid of." Mike turned right.

"You're gonna say you never had this problem with Melody, right?"

"We didn't, but that's because you have two different power sets. Hers is about illusions and shields. Yours is about speed and strength. It's not your fault."

"It's Mom's..." mumbled Benny, and Mike slammed on his brakes—both in response to what his son had said and because somebody had cut him off. Mike snapped his gaze to Benny.

"It is *not* your mother's fault. Don't ever say that."

"Sorry..."

*You never blame Mom for anything... I don't think you can...*

They stopped at the high school. Mike couldn't see his oldest anywhere.

"Do you see Melody?"

"Nope." Suddenly, the passenger-side door opened and the seatbelt clicked closed. Melody became visible in that seat, her backpack on the floor.

"Hey, Mels. How was school?"

"It was fine. Can we just go home?"

"Are you sure—"

"I just wanna go home, Dad."

"All right, then. Maybe you should tell your mother about it, then."

"I really don't want to talk about anything. Unless Benny got in trouble for pranking Mr. Hard-Ass again."

"Which he did and he's been transferred to a different class."

Melody sighed and stared out the window.

In front of City Hall, the protestors were still stationed; however,



there were a lot more than there had been that morning. Dustin was still the ringleader and still yelling about how essential heroes were to protecting society as a whole. Police were nearby, but they appeared to be protecting the protestors rather than accosting them.

Such was the world without superheroes...

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"Hey, babe, how was work?"

El groaned as she banged her head against the doorframe.

"That good, huh?" Mike handed Sarah a wooden block. She babbled and smacked it against another one.

"I hate the parents I have to deal with—both the temporary homes and the birth parents."

"You love the kids, though."

"And I wish we had room to take in fosters. But we don't."

"C'mere." She entered the baby's room and he pulled her down to the floor. Quickly, Mike planted a kiss on his wife's lips and picked up their youngest before placing Sarah on El's lap. "Sarah missed her mommy today."

El looked down at her baby, who was staring up at her with the same dark eyes that Mike had. She couldn't help but smile widely as she carried Sarah out to the kitchen so she and Mike could make dinner together. Once that was done and Melody and Benny had done the dishes, El took the time to put their youngest to bed so Mike could do some last-minute writing. A few minutes later, she headed into their bedroom and found Mike sitting in the bed.

"Dustin was protesting in front of City Hall again today," Mike told her as she changed into her nightgown.

"I doubt it'll have an impact. He's been protesting since the Ban went into effect."

"But he's getting a larger following every day." She climbed into bed

next to him and under the blankets. He shut his notebook and set it on the nightstand. "I think he's starting to make that difference."

"I hope... I hope I can go back to hero work."

"If the Ban's lifted, I know you will." He wrapped his arms around her and held her tightly. "And you can teach Melody and Benny how to use their powers better."

"Did Benny get in trouble again?"

"He's been transferred to another class."

"Mm..."

She snuggled up to him.

"It's been a while since we were like this..."

"You've been busy." He slid his fingers under the hem of her nightgown. "And stressed out."

"Y-yeah..." She closed her eyes.

"Let me help you."

"The kids."

"We'll be fine as long as we're quiet." He pressed his lips against hers and she whimpered lightly.

For a moment when they'd finished, El stared at the ceiling.

She hadn't told Mike something, and the guilt of that was eating away at her. A couple of weeks earlier, she'd gotten a letter from somebody, an offer for her to go back to using her powers. Then during lunch, a woman had come and explained the whole thing—a woman named Elizabeth. She'd accepted in the heat of the moment, and in a few days she'd be leaving. But she had to keep the whole thing a secret from Mike. It was the first secret she'd kept from him since they'd gotten together back in high school and she felt so guilty.

He'd been the first person to accept her, powers and all. The father of her three children, the man she loved more than anything else on the planet, and she was keeping this a secret from him She should've said no. But she was stuck.

El felt Mike wrap his arms around her again and nuzzle his face into her neck. It was comforting, and she found herself able to fall asleep.

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**Yeah, this is an *Incredibles* AU. Major differences abound, though.**

**So long and thanks for all the fish!**